

Sri Krishna Kathamrita



Bindu

Issue 598

madhu-kaitabha-vadhah

The Killing of the Demons Madhu and Kaitabha





Sri Krishna Kathamrita Bindu

Fortnightly email mini-magazine from Gopal Jiu Publications

Issue No. 598

Śrī Aparā Ekādaśī

23 May 2025

Highlights

• THE LORD PROTECTS HIS DEVOTEES

His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

• THE MEANING OF VISHWAMBHAR

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

• WHO CAN UNDERSTAND THE LORD?

Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

• THE STORY OF MADHU AND KAITABHA

From the Śānti-parva of Mahābhārata



THE LORD PROTECTS HIS DEVOTEES



His Divine Grace A. C.
Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

The Supreme Personality of Godhead in his transcendental form is always ready to give protection to his devotees. As mentioned herein, the Lord in the form of Hayagriva killed two demons named Madhu and Kaitabha when they attacked Lord Brahma. Modern demons think that there was no life in the beginning of creation, but from *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* we understand that the first living creature created by the Supreme Personality of Godhead was Lord Brahma, who is full of Vedic understanding. Unfortunately, those entrusted with distributing Vedic knowledge, such as the devotees engaged in spreading Krishna consciousness, may sometimes be attacked by demons, but they must rest assured that demoniac attacks will not be able to harm them, for the Lord is always prepared to give them protection. The Vedas provide the knowledge by which we can understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead (*vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyah* [Bg. 15.15]).



Unknown photographer.

The devotees of the Lord are always ready to spread knowledge by which one may understand the Lord through Krishna consciousness, but the demons, being unable to understand the Supreme Lord, are full of ignorance and passion. Thus the Lord, whose form is transcendental, is always ready to kill the demons. By culturing the mode of goodness, one can understand the position of the transcendental Lord and how the Lord is always prepared to remove all obstacles on the path of understanding him. 🍌
— Purport to *Bhāg.* 7.9.37

Cover: Lord Vishnu kills the demons Madhu and Kaitabha. Unknown artist. Circa 1760. Himachal Pradesh, Guler.

Unknown artist. Circa. 1770. Bengal. Mughal



THE MEANING OF VISHWAMBHAR



Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur Prabhupada

Previously, when the earth was submerged in the water, Lord Narayan, in his incarnation as Varaha, delivered and maintained the earth and thus became known as Vishwambhar. Then again, prior to the incarnation of Hayagriva, the science of the Absolute Truth was lost to this world, thus the Vedic literature was merged in the water. Lord Sri Hayagriva then killed the material knowledge and natural science of the demons Madhu and Kaitabha, and in this way displayed the glories of Vedic knowledge. For this reason also he is known as Vishwambhar. Whenever the demigods and human beings are harassed by

the demons, various incarnations of Lord Narayan appear in this world to protect and maintain the universe. Such incarnations are therefore also known as Vishwambhar. Since this boy [referring to young Nimai Pandit] will also protect and maintain the universe just like the incarnations of Vishnu, the name Vishwambhar is appropriate for him. After considering in this way, the learned scholars selected the name Vishwambhar for the Lord. Due to his advent and the influence of chanting and hearing the names of Krishna, people who had forgotten their constitutional position and become afflicted with unwanted habits have gotten relief; that is, they have become situated in their constitutional position, attaining the goal of life. 🍌

— Purport to Srila Vrindavan Das Thakur's *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavatā, ādi* 4.48. English translation by Bhumiapati Das. Edited and published by Pundarik Vidyānidhi Das. Vrjaraj Press. Vrindavan. 2001.



Vintage painting by an unknown artist.

The Lord is known as Madhusudan because Vishnu killed the demon Madhu. In his commentary on Bhagavad-gītā 2.1, Srila Baladev Vidyabhushan gives another reason: madhusūdāna iti tasya śokam api madhuvan nihaniṣyatīti bhāvaḥ — “Krishna is addressed in this verse as Madhusudan because his sweetness (madhu), would destroy (sūdāna) the lamentation of Arjuna.”

Unknown artist. South India. Circa 1800.



The Lord has innumerable forms

WHO CAN UNDERSTAND THE LORD?



Sri Srimad Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja

Only the devotees, those who are very dear to the Lord, know the Lord and the truth or *tattva* relating to him. Others who are not devotees cannot know. They cannot speak about it. If they speak, their statements cannot be accepted as authoritative because if the *jñānīs*, *yogīs*, *karmīs*, and learned scholars are not devotees, they cannot understand the Supreme Lord and the truth relating to him. The Supreme Lord is never manifest before them. He only manifests himself before his dear devotees:

*nāhaṁ prakāśaḥ sarvasya yoga-māyā-samāvṛtaḥ
mūḍho 'yaṁ nābhijānāti loko mām ajam avyayam*

Krishna has said this in *Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā* (7.25). He is never manifest everywhere or before everyone. He is always covered by his *yoga-māyā śakti*. So a rascal, *mūḍhā*,

cannot understand him. Such a person only speculates. The speculators or impersonalists, *māyāvādīs*, cannot know or understand the Supreme Lord and how he has a transcendental form. The Supreme Lord has innumerable forms — *acyutam anādim ananta-rūpam* [*Brahma-saṁhitā* 5.33]. Although the Supreme Lord is one without a second, *advaya-tattva*, still he has innumerable forms. This is a very mysterious and confidential truth. It is very confusing for the non-devotees, the atheists. They cannot understand it. But those who are dear devotees of the Lord can understand it because it is transcendental truth. It is not material. It must be realized, and this realization depends upon the degree of devotion or surrender a person has. One who is not surrendered to the lotus feet of Krishna cannot understand. Krishna's causeless mercy is required to know and understand him. One cannot understand the Supreme Lord by dint of his mundane scholarship, knowledge or intelligence or strength. Only the causeless mercy of the Lord is required. Lord Brahma describes in the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (10.14.29):

*athāpi te deva padāmbuja-dvaya-
prasāda-leśānugrṛhita eva hi*



Vintage painting by an unknown artist.

Krishna is also known as Madhusudan because Madhu was the father of Vrishni, whose later descendents include both Vasudev and Devaki.

*jānāti tattvaṁ bhagavan-mahimno
na cānya eko 'pi ciraṁ vicinvaṁ*

“My Lord, if one is favored by even a slight trace of the mercy of your lotus feet, he can understand the greatness of your personality. But those who speculate to understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead are unable to know you, even though they continue to study the Vedas for many years.”

Gopinath Acharya, a dear devotee of the Lord, quoted this verse before Sarvabhauma Bhattacharya, a great Vedantist, follower of Sankaracharya, when Sarvabhauma couldn't understand how Sriman Chaitanya Mahaprabhu is the Supreme Lord. Gopinath Acharya also told him:

*iśvaraṇa kṛpā-leśa haya ta' yāhāre
sei ta' iśvara-tattva jānibāre pāre*

“If one receives but a tiny bit of the Lord's favor by dint of devotional service, he can understand the nature of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. (Cc. madhya 6.83)

One who has received some mercy of the Lord can understand the truth relating to the Lord; he can understand the Supreme Lord. But those who are *māyāvādīs*, speculators, even if they go on with their speculation for hundreds of years or hundreds of lives they cannot understand him. 🍊

— From a lecture in Bhubaneswar on 9 September 1989.



Lord Vishnu killed the demons Madhu and Kaitabha and restored the Vedas to Brahma

THE STORY OF MADHU AND KAITABHA



*Adapted from Mahābharata,
Śānti-parva chapter 348*

Krishna is famous as madhusūdana, the killer of the Madhu demon, and as kaitābhārdanaḥ, the killer of the demon Kaitabha. [For a few examples, see Bg. 1.34, 6.33 and Bhāg. 3.9.27, 3.24.18, and 10.40.18.] The story behind those names is found in the śānti-parva section of the Mahābharata, as well as in the Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa and the Kālikā Purāṇa. The story is also briefly recounted by Srila Prabhupada in Krishna book chapter 40, and in his purport to Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.9.37.

Brahma, the grandsire of the material universe, took birth from the lotus that comes from the navel of Lord Vishnu. Seated on that lotus, on the order of the Lord, Brahma began to create the universe. In that primeval lotus, two drops of water had been dropped there by Narayan. One of those drops looked like honey. From that drop came a demon named Madhu who had the quality of ignorance — *tamo guṇa*. The other drop of water within the lotus was very hard. From it sprang

the demon Kaitabha made up of the attribute of passion — *rajo guṇa*. [Note: According to some other Purāṇas, the two were born from the earwax of Lord Vishnu — *karna-srotas-udbhava*. One may ask: How is it possible that demoniac beings could emerge from the body of the Lord? However, Madhu and Kaitabha were not *svāṁśas* — direct expansions of the Lord; rather, they appeared while Vishnu was resting and his external energy was active. Thus, these two demons are products of *ahaṅkāra* — false ego, arising from the Lord's *bahiraṅgā-śakti* — his external potency.]

The two performed severe austerities for thousands of years. This pleased the goddess of fortune Lakshmi Devi, who appeared before them and gave them the boon that they would only die at a time of their choosing. Arrogant from this benediction and armed with clubs, the two powerful demons began to roam about that vast primeval lotus. They beheld within it Brahma engaged in creating the four Vedas. In front of Lord Brahma, those two foremost demons seized the Vedas and dove to the bottom of the ocean of waters that surrounded the lotus. Seeing the Vedas forcibly taken, Brahma became filled with grief. He then addressed the Supreme Lord:



Unknown artist. Circa 1645. Philadelphia Museum of Art

Defeat of the demons Madhu and Kaitabha

vedā me paramaṁ cakṣur vedā me paramaṁ balam
vedā me paramaṁ dhāma vedā me brahma cottamam

“The Vedas are my ultimate eyes. The Vedas are my ultimate strength. The Vedas are my ultimate refuge. The Vedas are my supreme Brahman. (Text 335.29)

mama vedā hṛtāḥ sarve dānavābhyāṁ balād itaḥ
andhakārā hi me lokā jātā vedair vinākṛtāḥ
vedān ṛte hi kiṁ kuryāṁ lokān vai sraṣṭum udyataḥ

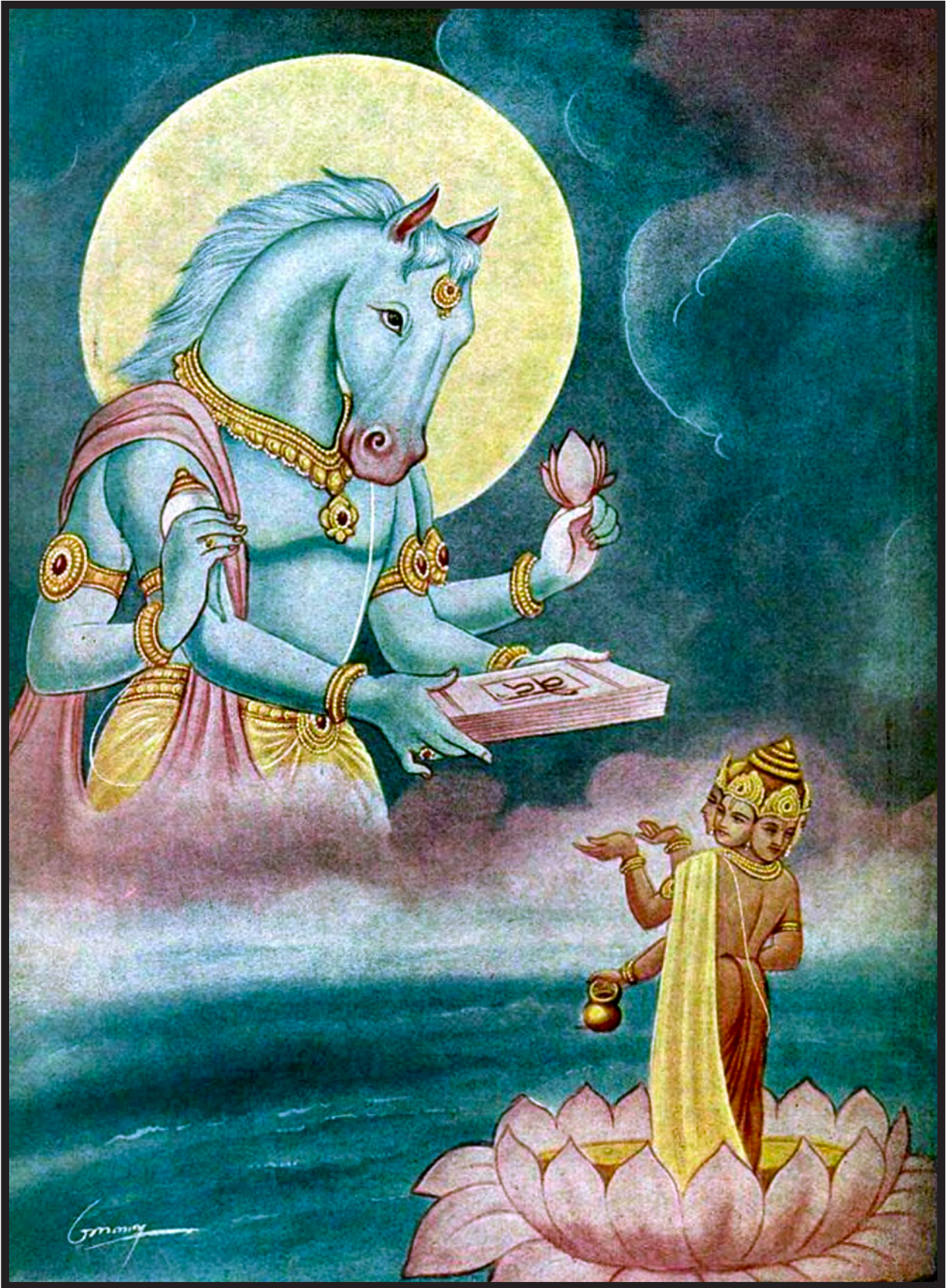
The Vedas have been forcibly taken away from me by the two demons. Deprived of the Vedas, the worlds I have created have become enveloped in darkness. Without the Vedas how will I succeed in my work of creation? (30)

Brahma went on, “Alas, great is the grief I suffer in losing the Vedas. My heart is very much pained. Who is there who can rescue me from this ocean of grief in which I am sunk? Who is there that will bring me the Vedas that I have lost? Who is there who will take compassion on me?” While Brahma was uttering these words, the solution suddenly arose in his mind — to offer prayers to Lord Hari. With folded hands, Brahma said, “I was born from your navel. The Vedas are my eyes. Yet those Vedas have been taken away from me. I have, therefore, become blind. Please awake from

your divine rest and save me, your devotee. Please give me back my eyes.”

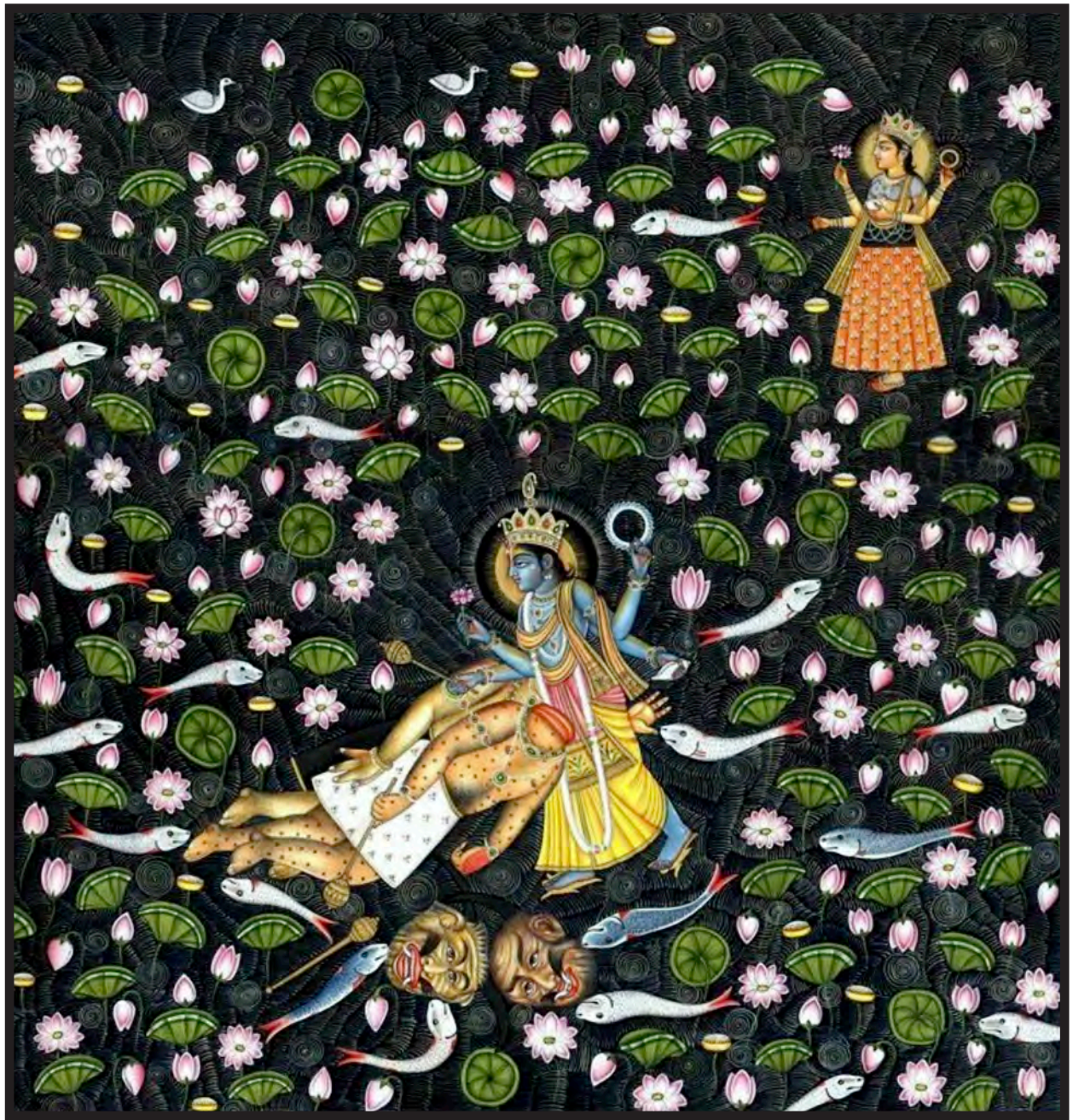
Thus praised by Brahma, the illustrious Lord gave up his sleep and resolved to recover the Vedas from the demons. He assumed the form of Hayagriva, the horse incarnation. Hayagriva began to loudly recite Vedic mantras. His pronunciation was distinct and reverberated through the air. It was sweet in every respect. The sound of his voice filled the nether region from end to end. Hearing the beautiful sound, the two demons threw down the Vedas and ran towards the spot from where those sounds appeared to come. At that time, Lord Hayagriva collected the Vedas, returned them to Brahma, and then disappeared.

The two demons Madhu and Kaitabha, not finding the person from whom those sounds came, quickly returned and discovered that the Vedas were gone. Then they saw the original creator, who had a fair complexion and an effulgence resembling the moon. Possessing immeasurable prowess, he was relishing the pleasure of *yoga-nidra* — divine rest, his body stretched out on the waters and occupying a vast space. The Supreme



Unknown artist. From the Hindi edition of the Mahabharata published by Gita Press.

The Lord manifested the form of Hayagriva and returned the Vedas to Brahma

Unknown artist. From an illustration to the *Devimahatmya*. Madhya Pradesh, Chatarpur. Circa 1775

The killing of Madhu and Kaitabha

Lord lay on the hoods of an excellent snake that emitted flames of fire. Beholding the Lord lying there, the two demons roared laughter. Endowed with the attributes of passion and ignorance, they said, “Without a doubt, this is the one who stole the Vedas from us. Who is he? Why is he sleeping on the hood of a snake?” Uttering these words, the demons then woke Lord Hari up from his divine rest. Rising from his bed, Lord Narayan understood that the two desired to fight with him. A battle then took place. However, per the boon

they had received, the two could only die when they chose. Vishnu shrewdly told them that since Lakshmi had given them a boon, they should in turn grant him (Lord Vishnu) one.

The demons proudly agreed. At that time Vishnu told them that he wanted their deaths.

Vishnu then killed the two demons and from that time on he became known as Madhusudan — the killer of Madhu. Having destroyed the two and restored the Vedas to Brahma, the Supreme Lord thus dispelled the grief of Brahma. Aided then

Unknown artist. From an edition of *Markandeya Purāṇa*, Gujarat-Rajasthan, Early 17th C.

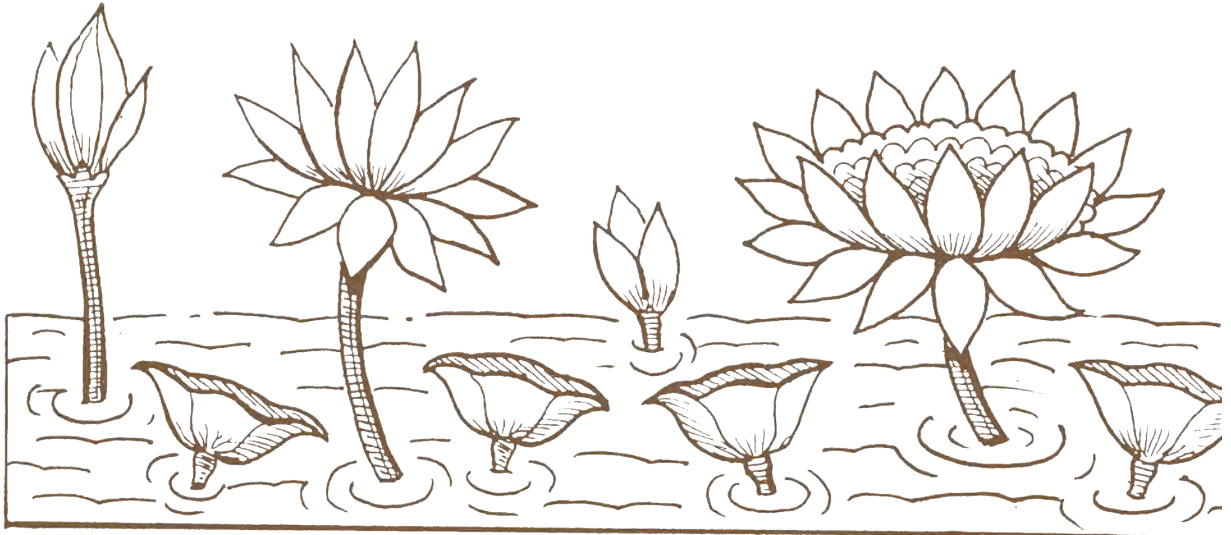


Vishnu on Ananta Sesha with Brahma, Lakshmi, and the demons Madhu and Kaitabha

by Hari and guided by the Vedas, Brahma created all the worlds with their moving and non-moving creatures. After this, Lord Hari disappeared from there and returned to his abode. 🍌

Bibliography

- *Mahābhārata* (electronic critical edition). Muneo Tokunaga and the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. Pune, India. 1999.
- *Mahābhārata*. English translation by Manmatha Nath Dutt. Published by HC. Das. Calcutta. 1896.
- Vettam Mani. *Purāṇic Encyclopedia*. Motilal Banarsidass. Delhi. 1989.





Unknown artist. From the Razmnama. Illustrated Persian translation of the *Mahabharata* in 1605.

Madhu and Kaitabha attack Lord Vishnu

Photo by Saurabh Saxena



KAITABHESHWAR TEMPLE

In the South Indian state of Karnataka, on the outskirts of the Kubaturu village, about 100 kilometers south of Hubballi, in a place popularly known as Kotipura, is the ancient Kaitabheshwar temple. According to the local legend there, the temple is the place where the demons Madhu and Kaitabha were killed by Vishnu. Although the demons were killed by Vishnu, as they were both devotees of Shiva, the temple of Kaitabheshwar is dedicated to Shiva. Scholars opine that the temple

Unknown photographer





Unknown photographer

Mandap of the Kaitabheshwar temple

was constructed during the reign of Hoysala King Vinayaditya, around 1100 AD. According to local legends and temple inscriptions, in Satya-yuga the demon Banasura discovered the linga at the Kaitabheshwar temple known as Kotishwar and had Vishwakarma construct the temple there.

Bibliography

- <https://karnatakatravel.blogspot.com/2011/12/temples-of-kotipura.html>
- <https://puratattva.in/kubatur-the-forgotten-city-of-chandrahassa/comment-page-1/>
- <http://rakeshholla.blogspot.ae/2011/07/kaithabeshwara-temple-at-kotipura.html>
- <https://road-to-nara.com/2023/09/15/the-choice-of-death-the-legend-of-madhu-kaitabha/>

SRI KRISHNA KATHAMRITA BINDU

A free bi-monthly service provided by Gopal Jiu Publications

Gopal Jiu Publications is a section of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

Quotations from the books, letters, and lectures of His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada ©Bhaktivedanta Book Trust. All other materials, unless specified, © ISKCON Gopal Jiu Publications. All rights reserved. Blanket permission is given to redistribute Bindu in electronic or print form provided no changes are made to the contents.



Unknown photographer

Wall carving of Ugra Nrisimha at the Kaitabheshwar temple